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SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR EUR/PGI:JIM KUYKENDALL, EUR/NB

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TAGS: [KWMN](#) [PHUM](#) [DA](#)
SUBJECT: WOMEN'S ISSUES - USG ENGAGEMENT

REF: 09 STATE 124579

(U) SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED; PROTECT ACCORDINGLY. NOT
FOR INTERNET DISSEMINATION.

¶1. (SBU) INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: Denmark is a leader in promoting gender equality at home and abroad. It consistently ranks in the top ten in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (seventh in 2009; the United States ranked 31st). While some Danish women have identified "glass ceiling" issues in business, the principal USG engagement with Denmark on women's issues is to exchange best practices and explore possibilities of joint action abroad. END INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) The WEF Global Gender Gap Report rates Denmark number one in the world when it comes to parity of educational attainment; in tertiary education, females outnumber males by 40 percent. Thanks to educational parity and state-funded childcare, a high percentage (70.8 percent) of Danish women participate in the labor market; however, wage inequality persists due to lingering discriminatory attitudes in society and de-facto gender-segregation in fields of employment: women are over-represented in service, social and health fields, and under-represented in construction, crafts and engineering. Certain Danish women have shared with Ambassador Fulton their view that state-provided childcare leave (52 weeks' paid leave to be shared between the parents), while helpful to new families, ends up disadvantaging women who seek to pursue careers due to their extended absence from the workplace. Women's political participation is above average, without quotas: 37 percent of the members of parliament are women, as are 42 percent of Cabinet ministers.

¶3. (SBU) Denmark's development assistance programs have emphasized Millennium Development Goal 3 ("Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment"), focusing on gender mainstreaming as well as special attention to the needs of females. In 2007, Denmark launched a Global Call to Action in support of MDG3. On April 23, 2009, Secretary Clinton accepted a symbolic MDG3 torch from Danish Minister for Development Cooperation Ulla Toernaes; in so doing, the Secretary noted that she was joining UNSYG, the President of the World Bank and other leaders in the public and private sectors in becoming a "Torch Bearer" in this effort. She pledged to work with the Danish government and others "to expand equality and opportunity for women and girls." First Lady Michelle Obama accepted an MDG3 torch from Toernaes on October 2 in Copenhagen.

¶4. (SBU) Among the most vulnerable groups of women and girls in Denmark are immigrants from traditional Muslim societies. The generous social welfare system that facilitates women's participation in the labor market can also, perversely, make it easier for immigrant families (accustomed to a more modest standard of living than is the norm here) to keep their women at home. The Danish Government has stepped up efforts to

promote integration; among countless state initiatives is a recently-announced program to pay immigrant women 15,000 Danish Kroner (approx. USD3,000) to learn the Danish language. The Embassy has active engagement with the mostly-Muslim immigrant community and with Danish entities - both public and private - that promote integration. One novel idea developed by an adult-education center for immigrants in Copenhagen is the creation of groups of Muslim women who are trained to identify stay-at-home immigrant women and to visit them with information and guidance about Danish society and expectations, such as full-time attendance at schools for their children.

¶5. (SBU) Ambassador Fulton has reached out to Danish women's groups, including the self-styled Albright Gruppen (named in honor of former Secretary Madeleine Albright), encouraging and facilitating networking among professional women, as well as networks of business women, women involved in breast-cancer issues, and "international" immigrant women in Odense, Denmark's third-largest city. The Ambassador is in discussion with the Department and the Danish ministries regarding a proposed joint conference to be held in the latter half of 2010 in Copenhagen on the theme of "Global Security - The Importance of Women." The intent of the conference is to convene Nordic leaders on women's issues to highlight humanity's shared interest in gender equality, exchange best practices, and explore possibilities for enhanced cooperation in the years to 2015, target date for attainment of the MDGs.

¶6. (U) Ambassador Fulton cleared this message in draft before departing on leave.
MCCULLEY